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ZNR UUUUU ZZH
R 080802Z SEP 08
FM AMEMBASSY ASTANA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 3217
RUEHAK/AMEMBASSY ANKARA 2180
RUEHIT/AMCONSUL ISTANBUL 0015
RUEHFT/AMCONSUL FRANKFURT 6876

UNCLAS ASTANA 001698

UNCLAS ASTANA 000748

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR CA/FPP: EHOLMES, CA/VO/F/P: MEARL, DS/CR/VG
DEPT ALSO PASS TO KCC
POSTS FOR FRAUD PREVENTION MANAGERS
FRANKFURT FOR RCOS

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [CVIS](#) [KFRD](#) [KZ](#)

SUBJECT: KAZAKHSTAN B1/B2 VALIDATION STUDIES

11. (SBU) SUMMARY: Embassy Astana and Embassy Branch Office Almaty conducted validation studies of B1/B2 visa issuances. By combining results from DHS's Arrival Departure Information System (ADIS) and follow-up telephone calls, posts examined samples of B1/B2 issuances from August 1, 2007 - January 31, 2008 and discovered that a surprisingly small percentage of applicants overstayed or adjusted status; for Astana, the rate was 0.9%, and for Almaty the rate was 1.6%. END SUMMARY.

The Validation Study

12. (SBU) Kazakhstan does not have consular districts to formally divide the NIV workload between Astana and Almaty, however the composition and geographic source of the NIV workload is different. B1/B2 applicants comprise only about 29% of Astana's annual NIV workload, but 56% of Almaty's. The major difference in composition comes from Summer Work and Travel; almost 40% of Astana's workload is from this program. Astana is located more than 1000 kilometers north of Almaty, a fact which is reflected in the geographic source of the applicants. Although applicants can go to either Almaty or Astana, as a practical matter virtually all residents of northern Kazakhstan go to Astana, and residents of southern Kazakhstan go to Almaty.

13. (SBU) Astana issued 639 B1/B2 visas from August 1, 2007 to January 31, 2008. Almaty issued 2,245 B1/B2 visas in the same time period. Samples were randomly chosen using Excel. Utilizing the expectation of a 7% rate of non-returning travelers derived from a past validation study, we chose sample sizes to be 95% confident of a deviation of +/- 2%; that is, to be 95% confident that the true non-return rate is between 5% and 9%. For Astana, this calculation implied a sample size of 316; we chose 320 visa recipients - exactly half the sample - as a round number. For Almaty, the calculation called for a sample size of 489; we chose 500 visa recipients as a round number. Both Almaty and Astana checked arrival and departure status using ADIS and/or phone calls. Of the 320 individuals checked in Astana, 3 did not return, a rate of 0.9%. Of the 500 individuals checked in Almaty, 8 did not return, a rate of 1.6%. For Astana, due to the combination of an extremely low non-return rate and a relatively large sample size, a meaningful two-sided confidence interval cannot be constructed. However, it is possible to say we are 95% confident the true non-return rate is not higher than 1.6%. For Almaty, we are 95% confident the population non-return rate is between 0.6% and 2.6%. As the confidence intervals for the two posts have a large amount of overlap, the deviation in the non-return rates between the two posts is not statistically significant.

14. (SBU) Refusal rates in Kazakhstan are not particularly high: for

the sample period, Astana and Almaty had virtually identical non-adjusted refusal rates for B1/B2 applicants - 13.1% and 13.5%, respectively. Most refusals are concentrated in travelers having a sole B2 purpose. Reflective of the strength of Kazakhstan's economy recently (until the recent worldwide "credit crunch", the economy had been growing at about 9% a year for the past 5 years), business applicants are for the most part very strong. Common business applicants include employees of oil and oil services companies (both local and US-based), employees of local and international financial and services firms, and employees of large agricultural and mining concerns.

15. (SBU) Post was surprised and pleased by the non-return rate. Little insight can be gathered about trends, as the few visa recipients that did not return appear to be simply random occurrences. Of the eleven total non-returns, five legally changed status or extended their stays in the U.S. Six provided what appears to be intentionally misleading information in their applications. While the number of non-returns is too low to indicate trends, it does support post's long-held view of Kazakhstan as a low fraud environment.